

Window on Jordan

Ahlan expatriates!

By a Star Staff Writer
JORDANIAN EXPATRIATES are returning to their motherland for the summer vacation in the thousands. They come home, mainly from the Gulf countries, to visit relatives, buy property, receive medical treatment, invest in projects or just to tour the Kingdom and relax.

Most come by air, landing at Queen Alia International Airport, the Kingdom's gateway to the world and one of its modern landmarks. Others drive the long desert highways from the Gulf to Jordan entering through the southern border posts. But almost all come with their families: children, mothers, wives and all.

This is the season when points of entry become congested. Airlines fly extra flights in order to meet the huge demand and naturally our airport, which at other times is a quiet and peaceful place, teems with passengers queuing at immigration and customs counters. This is where mini-tragedies take place almost daily.

Of course I'll have no problem with the customs...I'm an expatriate!



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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Brotherhood's decision reshuffles political cards

By Raed Al Abed
Star Staff Writer
LAST WEEK'S bombshell decision by the Muslim Brotherhood to boycott the coming general elections while calling for political reforms is being seen as a painful blow to the credibility and prestige of the government of Dr Abdel Salam Majali.



Thuneibat

The government is trying to put a brave face and minimize the damage. But it is nervously waiting for a similar announcement by the Islamic Action Front (IAF), expected on Saturday, which observers believe will be in line with that of the Muslim Brotherhood.



Algeria frees leader of Islamic party

By Roula Khalaf
LONDON—Algeria's army-backed government released Tuesday Abassi Madani, leader of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), in a move the FIS said would help resolve Algeria's five-year conflict.

Madani, whose party was stripped of an election victory in 1992, plunging Algeria into bloody conflict, was jailed for 12 years in July 1992 for undermining state security. Both the FIS and other Algerian opposition parties have repeatedly called for his release and that of Ali Belhadj, his more radical deputy, now believed to be held in Biskia, south of Algiers.

Madani's release comes a week after Abdelkader Hachani, the FIS number three, was freed from prison.



Jurassic Fright: An eight ton, 40 foot Tyrannosaurus Rex—the world's fastest moving animatronic—lunges at a boatload of guests at Universal Studio's Hollywood's Jurassic Park: The Ride. One year after its introduction, the Steven Spielberg-inspired thrill ride continues to be wildly popular for its state-of-the-art animatronic dinosaurs from both "Jurassic Park" and "The Lost World" movies and has helped the motion picture and television-based theme park set new attendance records. To mark its first anniversary, designers have outfitted the California, USA, attraction with new sound effects and an improved interior sound system. (PR NewsFoto)

Dakamseh to be sentenced on Saturday

AMMAN (Star)—The two-month trial of Ahmed Al Dakamseh, the Jordanian soldier who is accused of killing seven Israeli schoolgirls in Baqura last March, will come to an end on Saturday when the military court will pass sentence.

If convicted on murder charges, Dakamseh could face the death penalty. While the military prosecutor is calling for the maximum penalty, defence lawyers, led by Hussein Mjalli, feel satisfied that the



Dakamseh

Local businessmen divided on Medpartenariat

By Iham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer
"ALL HAVE come, but to sell." This was the first impression of some local businessmen who took part in the Medpartenariat Jordan '97 conference which concluded its meeting this week.

Though this is the 'first' impression that may change completely by time, yet it hints at a feeling of disappointment, which is not the aim of the gathering.

However, other businessmen in addition to officials and economic experts see the event as a success. To be fair, just a week is not enough to pass a rational judgement or a true evaluation of the venue.

Success of this kind of worldwide meetings is measured by their consequences, and these need enough time to materialize.

Gianni Versace: Death of 'King of frock 'n' roll'

By Richard Boudreaux
ROME, MIAMI—Born to a poor dressmaker in southern Italy, Gianni Versace grew up to be proclaimed "the king of frock 'n' roll." His multimillion-dollar fashion empire featured glitzy shows, astronomical price tags and roaring profits on the worldwide sale of trendy clothes, perfume and accessories.



Versace with actress Demi Moore in Paris last week

trendy clothes for men and women. And for the rich and famous. Those mourning the 50-year-

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30 years of community service and voluntarism

By Nadia Takriti Kamal

THE ARAB Cultural Society which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, stands as a testimony to the diversity and vitality of the voluntary sector in our country.

The thought of establishing the society was an attempt to respond to a need, tangible at the time, for a school with a special educational outlook. Patriotic, non-partisan, driven by scientific thinking and strong ethics, determined to provide modern up to date teaching and preserve Arab cultural identity simultaneously.

Funds were raised from concerned individuals and establishments, and volunteers pooled their human capital and expertise to realize their vision. Families, who believed in quality community-driven education, brought, in their children, year after year, as classes gradually expanded from kindergarten to *Tawjihi*. The school is steered by an education council of dedicated professionals from various national educational bodies, patiently volunteering their time and effort.

A wealth of activities accumulated over time in other committees along side education. The social committee undertakes some poverty alleviation involvement, rather limited but profound. This helps get poor students throughout school and university education. It works closely with the local community on varied charitable and civic concerns as they emerge.

The cultural committee runs monthly seminars and lectures on topics relevant to children's upbringing, education, family welfare, as well as social and national concerns.

The embroidery committee produces classic hand-made pieces of national heritage which brings history and art together.

These provide work opportunities for women in low-income areas to help them earn a living and supplement family income, while upper middle class families from different walks of Jordanian society appreciate obtaining these artifacts. The sewing sub-committee produces school costumes and play suits for almost 850 students annually.

The Alumni Committee is paving its way to represent and bring together the school's graduates, university graduates by now and active members of our national labor force.

The kindergarten established in Wihdat, with so many donations, is a model to serve children from an underprivileged area.

This is merely a glimpse reflecting the daily, persistent and diversified involvement of hundreds of people in this community organization and in solidarity and concerted action. A place which gives room for citizens, old and young, with middle to higher educational establishment profiles, a majority with mere charitable orientation and a limited look to a few sophisticated and tireless women who play low profiles as they nurture others into maturity. Volunteers with whom I had the pleasure to serve in the ranks and files of this NGO over the past two years.

There are issues of critical weight to the future of this organization, among which are:

■ Upholding or amending the organization goals after 30 years of establishment, especially the educational core goal which was built upon pan-Arab background. It is gradually changing focus on the one hand, and something which is being challenged since the mid-eighties by a growing number of institutions with vast resources. It

claims to cater for quality education. Its sheer absorptive capacity and diversity has induced a shift in the clientele of the school, the majority of whom are average middle class white collar professionals who can't afford the more expensive alternatives because of their eroding incomes in an increasingly difficult macro economic situation.

The school earnings from fees hardly covers upgrading school facilities if there is no supplementary income earning involvement. To maintain its record of excellence, the school has to develop a distinct comparative advantage. A real focus on improving quality of education by consolidating critical thinking, offering elective courses, institutionalizing compulsory community service, coping with informalities developments and introducing special summer options, are a few possibilities. Extending bridges with other schools to build economies of scale vis-a-vis teacher training and a community spirit, and consolidated solutions to student issues, is imperative.

■ The amount of dedicated team work and professional voluntary commitment is shifting in nature, in the sense that the individual used to be at the disposal of the institution all along but not any more. The institution has to meet individual needs from within, as volunteers become beneficiaries at the same time. This means a definite shift of membership in the organization and a different composition of participants who are no longer bound by a noble goal worthy of fighting for and standing up to, but who constitute a vested group of clientele. This poses a real challenge in defining voluntarism!

■ The organization has to sharpen its focus on community development for the



underprivileged in low income areas. Efficiency in service delivery, wide coverage and reach out in all activities, be it income generating for women in embroidery, or scholarships and grants, or poverty alleviation or cultural events, are requirements for maintaining the role of the Arab Cultural Society and rationalizing its endeavours to achieve its objectives.

■ The real resources that the society can count on, are its school graduates who work in various professions and have different qualifications and could add new input to its programs and activities, and take new initiatives which may be more

professional and up to date in trying to realize its goals, with vitality and consolidated vision. The challenge is to bring out their loyalty and sense of belonging to the institution at its best, and gear them to pool their energy in constructive group and teamwork to contribute their share in civil society beyond their personal needs. One looks forward to witnessing an established institution renew its outlook, cadres, target groups, and methodologies, and thus survives into a new era while preserving and invigorating its original noble objectives.

Brotherhood's decision reshuffles political cards

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Lower House, but that figure later dropped to 15 after two deputies resigned their IAF membership.

The Islamist golden era was after the 1989 elections, which was held under a multi-vote system. The Brotherhood's representatives gained 22 seats and about 15.5 percent of the total votes. In both elections Islamist candidates had the highest number of votes.

Mr Thuneibat said if elections were held without the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition parties "the government will end up electing itself, and the coming parliament will have no credibility or legitimacy."

Mr Thuneibat is considered the godfather of the Islamic movement, and serves as an intermediary between the moderates and the hardliners. He is said to have supported the idea of Islamist participation in the parliamentary elections.

He warned against applying pressure or threats against the Islamic movement and added that in case of any pressure the reaction will be negative.

On the other hand, the IAF's Shura Council will hold its meeting on Saturday to discuss the issue. However, Dr. Mohammad Oweidha, secretary of the IAF stressed that the IAF's decision will most likely be in favor of boycotting the elections since "70 percent of the IAF's members are also members of the Muslim Brotherhood."

Three opposition parties have already reacted to the Muslim Brotherhood decision. The leftist People's Democratic Party (Hashd), and two pan-Arabists, the National Action Front and the Jordanian Constitutional Party.

Hashd whose third general conference, last June, decided to participate in the parliamentary elections together with the other forces, reversed its stand and adopted the Muslim Brotherhood's decision.

"The Muslim Brotherhood's decision came in response to the will of a wide popular sector," Salim Al Nahas, general secretary of Hashd, said. The party's third conference decided to participate in the elections on the condition that "national consensus" and the conditions for an honest and clean democratic elections existed. "But government practices do not comply with the interests of the country and the people," Nahas said.

Dr. Mohammad Al Majali, secretary general of Al Ansar Party, member of the opposition alliance, said that his party "supports the boycott decision as the reasons behind it are logical." Al Majali added that Al Ansar party took a decision to boycott the elections two months ago.

Next week, the rest of the opposition parties will also announce their final decision. However, observers argue that it is an uneasy process for the 11-party opposition camp to reverse their decision to participate.

Some opposition figures will contest the elections, if not under their party list, then individually. However, the Jordanian Communist Party and the Jordan Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party are expected to contest the elections, a step which will weaken the opposition.

The 12 Professional Associations (PA) are debating their next move and are expected to move towards a decision to boycott the elections. But a unanimous decision will not be easy.

In a meeting, early this week, the Council of PA Presidents, attended by only six presidents, initially adopted a suggestion presented by Mr. Hussein Mjalli, president of the Lawyers Association, calling on the professional associations to boycott the elections.

Mjalli is backed by some of the associations, presidents, like the Doctors, Engineers, Agricultural Engineers and Dentists.

Ahlan expatriates!

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Parents became irritated with their nagging children and babies crying. Not a single airport official showed up to investigate the reasons behind the bottleneck.

This was the kind of reception that Jordanian expats received at the airport on Saturday. There is no reason to doubt that this kind of reception takes place every day during the summer.

We all know that we don't have one of the busiest airports in the region—we wish. We all know—and have been lectured to that effect—how important Jordanian expatriates are to our economy—which is in a dire need for their investments and even vacation money.

We remember many years ago when the government even held conferences for Jordanian expatriates and offered them incentives to invest in Jordan.

Regardless of the nationality of those arriving at our points of entry they deserve a better reception. The airport is the first thing a visitor sees of Jordan and his or her experience there leaves a lasting impression.

There is no doubt that much could be done to improve airport facilities—especially those dealing with arriving passengers. The aircooling system should be fixed and the number of counters—with working computers—can be easily increased.

And then maybe we can move a step forward by cutting the number of immigration officers at passport control from two to one—like in all civilized countries. Ideally, checking a passport should not take more than a minute. For weary, sweaty and frustrated passengers arriving at Queen Alia International Airport, it took a lifetime!

Local businessmen divided

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situation Jordanian companies are facing today is mainly the reason behind complaints of some local businessmen. They run their firms successfully, but they can't promote their products easily, especially after losing traditional Gulf markets since 1990.

Of course, those big company owners do not really feel the burden as small firms do. These are encouraged to participate in the Medpartenariat hoping that it gives them a helping hand, as it is basically a philosophy to assist small and medium size companies which help to promote their products in new markets.

Jordan Cement Factories Marketing Director Mahmoud Subeiti is in an excited mood. He said that companies from Belgium, Spain, Britain and France have shown much interest in buying Jordanian Cement.

But Samer Zureikat from a medium-sized chemical company, is pessimistic. "All [outside companies] have come to sell, this is what we conclude from this conference."

But, he suggests that "we are to blame. We need European businessmen's partnership and technology. So the only way is to go to them and offer our service, instead of waiting for them to come."

Khaled Al Qudri, an executive partner in the Engineering Technical Co., puts the responsibility on promotional campaigns. He says "Jordan is not being given the proper required promotional media campaigns outside."

"We have come to the conference searching for untraditional markets for our products, but, found ourselves wondering who will sell to the other, is it us or the Europeans," he says.

However, some businessmen consider their contacts and meetings with their European counterparts as constructive, at least they have a positive impression about our industrial products. They also described the event as a way to know what European businessmen want from our market.

But the Medpartenariat has a regional angle. It soon became apparent that some European businessmen were

using it as an opportunity to make contacts with Arab businessmen participating.

This is despite the fact that Arab participation in the event was seen by many to be far below the required level.

In addition to Jordan, the host country, only four Arab countries took part: Palestine, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

Dr. Halaqi said that the absence of some Arab countries is mainly due to financial and technical reasons, as the EU did not provide financial support for the participating countries.

Generally speaking, Medpartenariat Jordan '97 remains an important economic venue that established a link between Jordanian businessmen and their European counterparts that focuses on the necessity to exchange products, expertise and manpower. This event also paved the way for further co-operation between EU and the countries of the Mediterranean basin in the fields of export, investment, joint ventures and transfer of technology.

Algeria frees leader of Islamic party

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Hachani was sentenced last week to five years, the period he had already served. But he was stripped of his civil rights for three years. FIS representatives in Europe said it was not clear whether Madani would be allowed to play a political role, and said his release might also be conditional.

Since cancellation of elections in 1992, the military-backed authorities have been bent on eradicating Islamist militants by force, while reshaping the country's political scene to ensure no opposition can again challenge the establishment.

This has been achieved through changes in the Algerian constitution barring parties from exploiting religion for political ends and increasing the powers of the president at the expense of the general assembly.

Algeria last month also held legislative elections which excluded the FIS and gave pro-government parties a majority in the assembly.

A FIS representative in Europe said: "We know they may have released Madani and Hachani just because they think the leaders no longer constitute a danger to them, and this will allow them to project an image of fairness and the return of the rule of law."

"Hachani cannot have political activities for three years and there may be conditions for Madani's release."

Nevertheless, the FIS said the move was a positive step by President Liamine Zeroual and hoped it would lead to negotiations on a political solution.

According to FIS leaders in exile, Madani's release strengthens and gives a single voice to an organization that has been plagued by internal

dissent.

The Algerian government, however, insists the FIS has become irrelevant. The FIS military arm, which is known to attack military targets, no longer represents a serious threat to the regime.

But some opposition leaders in Algeria do not rule out the possibility of a deal between the government and Madani, leading to a FIS call for a truce, perhaps eventually allowing rehabilitation of the party under another name.

FIS representatives in Europe also point out that the release of Madani may be part of a conciliatory pattern, evidenced by President Zeroual's removal this week of the hard-line head of the national gendarmerie.

FIS leaders remain sceptical Madani can call for a truce without first securing the release of Belhaj. There are also doubts that Madani alone can make any significant contribution to ending the violence.

Much of the violence against civilians is blamed on the so-called armed Islamic groups (GIA), which do not appear to respond to a specific political leadership. The FIS has denounced such attacks and distanced itself from the GIA.

Last month's parliamentary elections, the first since the aborted 1992 vote, took place in relative calm. Although marred by alleged fraud, low turnout and massive security measures, it produced Algeria's first multi-party parliament with a nonviolent Islamist party second in the voting.

Financial Times Syndication

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JORDAN WEEK

An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

Parties, parties everywhere

Politically, I suppose, from now till the next parliamentary elections, we should continue ululating, non stop. There will always be something going on. This week, for instance, we have the birth of a new political party. Everybody is congratulating himself, from the Minister of Interior, Nahir Rashid till the last cadres in the party which is given the name of the Nationalist Democratic Popular Movement. Mr Rashid later said "we hope the party great success in its service to the nation, to democracy and pluralism. A nice gesture, it may be added. At what is seen as an indirect reference to the Christian Democratic Party, Rashid assured that his ministry will not delay giving a license to any party if they complete their application procedures. He further stressed that the Ministry of Interior encourages democracy and pluralism. There are now 19 political parties in the Kingdom. Some of the members of the party are breakaways from Al Jamaheer, People's Democratic Party (Hashd), National Action Front, and independents. However, the self-congratulation could be short-lived. The party has just said that it will not stand for coming elections. People are saying this is a puzzle; why on earth then would they want to form a new party—to stand on the sidelines!

Press law under attack

It seems that the Temporary Press and Publications Law is not off the hook yet although it is *fait accompli*. Six weeklies—*Al Majd*, *Al Bilad*, *Al Sabeel*, *Al Haddad*, *Al Mithaq*, and *Sawt Al Mara*—are taking their case to the High Court of Justice. They are contesting the constitutionality of the press law. Lawyers for the weeklies that include Nageeb Al Rashdan, Hussein Mjalli and Hani Al Dahleh are saying that the law violates article 15 of the Constitution and infringes of citizens' rights, free expression and free opinion.

Poverty on the increase

Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Mamsar said that 21 percent of the population of this country live below the poverty line. He pointed out that this represents between 800 to 900 thousand people or between 140,000 to 150,000 families. He said that families which don't receive more than JD 120 per month are considered to live below the poverty line, while those at the JD 90 monthly level live below the absolute poverty line. The minister was speaking at a seminar on government policies for the treatment of the poverty in Jordan that was organized by the students council of the University of Jordan.

Car accidents and high cost

Car road accidents are causing the state a massive bundle. A report showed that the treasury had to cough up JD 100 million because of the enormous accidents that occurred on the Kingdom's roads in 1996. The report caught the interest of Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor. It pointed out that if the recommendations are taken into account, the number of car accidents could be cut by 50 percent. The study that was drawn up by Dr Nidal Qatamin pointed out that the number of car deaths in Jordan was 15 for every thousand, whereas in developed countries it is 0.2 percent to 0.5 percent per 1000. In third world countries it was between 0.2 percent and 20 percent per 1000.

Social attitudes

A latest survey has pointed out that 40 percent of people over the age of 20 have never voted in any elections, whether on the local or national level. This is the preliminary results of a survey on living conditions in Jordan that is to be published in August. One of the writers of the report, Oag Teistein, a Norwegian who gave a paper on women in Jordan at the seminar on women and political participation organized by the Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center. He came out with disturbing figures pointing out that 52 percent of men between the ages of 15 and 35 said that women should not have leading positions in society such as ministers, deputies or business. The percentage decreased to 37 percent between the 35 to 49 and the over 50 age groups. The younger group felt threatened from female competition over jobs it was suggested.

Mangoes for bingos

Customs refused to clear 12 refrigerated Jordanian containers carrying Indian mango. About 145 tons have arrived at the Amman's Customs Dept., after being tested by the Ministry of Health. Reports suggest that the shipment is not fit for public consumption because of rotten mangoes. The shipment was originally exported from Dubai to Saudi Arabia. But when the goods were refused to enter the country there, they were diverted to Jordan through the exporter. The trucks, which are manned by Jordanian drivers had already told their union that the cargo was rotten. A source at the Agricultural Marketing Corp., said that the shipment must either be destroyed or turned back to its original exporter.



His Majesty King Hussein inspecting military officers at the Al Hussein Air Force College, Tuesday. He graduated Royal Air Force cadets and presented them with certificates of appreciation. The King was received by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdel Hafez Mirai Kaabneh, chief of staff of the Royal Air Force and commander of the Al Hussein Air Force College. TRH Prince Hamza and Prince Hashem and Prime Minister Abdel Salam Al Majali attended the ceremony. Other top government officials also attended.

Women promise to put up a fight in coming elections

By Marwan Asmar
Star Staff Writer

JORDAN IS a country that could be on the right track regarding equality of the sexes. More and more women are playing a greater role in public life than ever before.

An increasing majority of women are joining the liberal professions, from the highest echelons of government to lawyers, teachers academics, politicians and journalists.

The present Minister of Planning, Dr Rima Khalaf, serves as a role model. A government technocrat who has a doctorate in economics from one of the American universities, is in her third consecutive term in government. She is in charge of the IMF/World Bank restructuring program.

In addition to that, we have two experienced women politicians in the Upper House of Parliament. Laila Sharaf, wife of the late Prime Minister Abdel Hamid Sharif, has long served the community. In addition, Naela Al Rashdan, a lawyer by profession, is an expert on family law.

In the Lower House, we had the election of the first woman deputy in the Lower House. Toujan Faisal won a seat in the 1993 elections. She has proved a controversial politician who challenged the government on every single issue in the last few years. Some have even uncharitably described her as the best man politician in the Lower House.

But women have been making great strides on the local politics. Her Royal Highness Princess Basma must be given due credit. It is through her encouragement that Imran Flaimat became the first head of the Wahadneh municipal council in Ajloun.

More and more women are winning seats on municipal

councils and taking their rightful place alongside men. More than nine women became councillors in several districts in the Kingdom.

And so, the full circle has turned. Today, more women are running for parliament than ever before in the democratic history of Jordan. It's no more behind the scenes, in fact some sociologists are arguing that this is the beginning of a transition from "domesticity" to playing the "power game of politics."

With names cropping up every day, four women have definitely announced that they will be running for the next parliamentary elections. Potentially the most eye catching of them is the very inconspicuous up till now, Leila Faisal, the sister of the famous fiery Lower House deputy Toujan Faisal.

With striking resemblance, she just announced that she will be running alongside her sister Toujan, for the Fifth electoral district. Despite the mutterings that can be heard in the background of "God help us," Leila Faisal does not have the same temperament as Toujan. She is more mellow, although she believes in the same ideas and policies which Toujan aspires to.

"Despite the fact that I believe in the same basic principles (as my sister), I have a different personality, more calmer and I am not a photocopy of her," she said.

She has not been altogether out of politics. It appeared lately, that for the last four years she was behind the scenes helping her sister to reshape her attitudes and perceptions towards particular government policies.

But Ms Faisal could be standing against another tough opponent. Vocal Communist Party member Emily Nafah has long been awaiting to get in Parliament to fight for women's rights. Not strictly on a

Verdict on Dakamseh expected Saturday

AMMAN (Star)—Sympathizers with Cpl. Ahmad Al Dakamseh feel satisfied about the fate of the Jordanian soldier who before the extraordinary session of last Sunday was facing the death sentence. The last hearing sent a signal that the sentence might be reduced. Al Dakamseh is standing trial in front of a military court for the alleged killing of seven Israeli girls in Baqoura area, in March.

On Sunday's session, the Military tribunal summoned two psychiatrists witnesses to put and end to the controversy of testimonies regarding the psychological state of the defendant from witnesses for the prosecution and the defence. Two psychiatrists recommended that the defendant should not be convicted of premeditated murder.

The two expert witnesses, stressed that an assailant who suffers from an anti-social personal disorder is totally considered as guilty of a lesser sentence.

Taking the British law in that regard, Dr Awni Sa'd said that "A murder committed by a person who suffers from an anti-social personal disorder is not considered as premeditated," he added that "in case of murder, if declared guilty, he is sent to a hospital instead of prison, if the court decides that."

On Saturday, Lawyer Hussein Mjalli, defending Al Dakamseh, requested the five-man military tribunal to mitigate the sentence.

In the longest presentation in the history of the Jordanian legal system, Mjalli refuted evidence presented by the military prosecutor last week and asked the court to consider it as invalid.

Mr Mjalli stressed that the defendant is suffering from "mental disorder" and Al Dakamseh is not responsible for the events in Baqoura due to a mental illness.

"The elements of which a premeditated crime is composed does not exist," maintained Mr Mjalli in his 220-page presentation.

Previous reports regarding corporal Dakamseh's mental state indicate that he suffers from a personal disorder which incapacitates his ability.

However, Dr Sa'd told the court that psychological manuals, like for example the classification of the World Health Organization (ICD-10) describe such cases evidenced by Dakamseh as "psychological impairments but are not considered as mental sickness."

"Those who are affected by this disorder understand [that they have committed a certain] act and are able to differentiate between right and wrong, but fail to realize the impact of their deeds," he added. "A person [who] suffers from a personal disorder tends to be aggressive."

According to Dr Sa'd if a person suffering from an anti-social personal disorder is provoked, he tends to react in a compulsive manner and does not stop to consider the impact of his actions on those around him."

Dr Nizam Abu Hileh, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Jordan confirmed Dr Sa'd's testimony.

"An anti-social disorder generally begins at a very young age and continues forever, while 40 percent of these cases could be reduced at the age of 35."

Dr Abu Hileh explains that different mental health manuals define a person who suffers from this disorder and commits murder, as "not fully responsible for his act." He added, however these manuals are not conclusive: "A person is guilty but has no responsibility over his acts." "Which means that the judge has the jurisdiction to rule as to whether to incarcerate him or recommend suitable treatment," Dr Abu Hileh said. "English (psychiatrists) would describe this case as a failure of will as a person is unable to control his acts."

Following the court session, the defence committee expressed satisfaction over Sunday's court hearings.

According to several lawyers, the court called on its witnesses because of doubts that occurred during the trial, which will serve in favor of Dakamseh and might even possibly commute the death penalty.

The verdict is expected to be announced this Saturday as stated by presiding judge Brigadier Ma'moun Khasawneh.

Caricaturist refutes anti-Semitism accusations

AMMAN (Star)—Anti-Semitism was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's angry charge of Jalal Rifai's caricatures. Israeli newspapers, claimed a few days ago. Netanyahu's office said that cartoons drawn up by Ad Dustour's Al Rifai were anti-Jewish, racist and anti-Semitic.

The statement was published in Israeli daily newspapers. *Morav* and *Ha'aretz* subsequently published some of Al Rifai's cartoons which are supposedly anti-Semitic.

Al Rifai said these claims come as a reaction to the mounting Arab, and Islamic anger to the injustices of Jewish settlers.

Writing in *Ad Dustour*, he spoke of the injustices and indeed, Jewish usurpation of all that is holy for Muslims and Christians.

The racism that Netanyahu accuses Jalal Rifai of is constantly practiced on the streets by his Israeli soldiers, he said.

And the world media and television are witnessing these abhorrent and inhuman measures everyday, and ever since the Likud government came to office, Al Rifai pointed out.

Al Rifai, who has been drawing political cartoons for over 20 years and is known all over the Arab world, is unrepentant.



One of Rifai's cartoons published in Israeli newspapers. (Bibi having a shower in Arab blood while the world weeps at only a finger's drop of Israeli blood).

starves a whole nation, or one who is the victim that is exposed to bullets by the day?

This is not the first accusation to be levelled against Arab caricaturists. *Ha'aretz* said that Egyptian cartoonist Omar Fahmi has also come under fire in Israel after he

published a book of cartoons that make fun of the person of the Israeli Prime Minister, his wife and US President Clinton.

Fahmi's caricature book, which touches on Netanyahu's womanizing among others, promises to be a best seller in the Arab world.

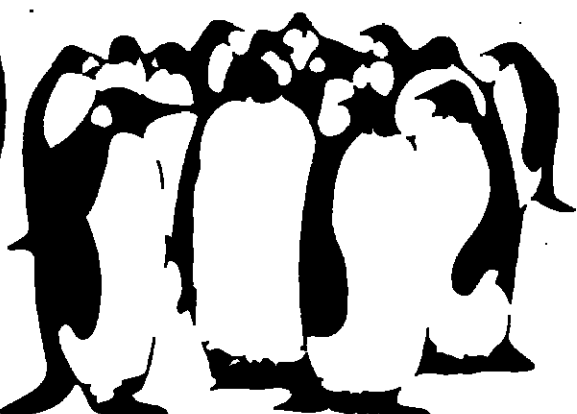
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We've come a long way since July 11, 1977 when we first flew between Amman and New York. Twenty years, we think, calls for an all-out treat for you. So during the month of July, we'll be raffling free roundtrip tickets on every flight on this route for a total of 200 winners. Fly Royal Jordanian to New York and celebrate our anniversary with us.

ROYAL JORDANIAN

Reflecting the Change.

AROUND
TOWNAir France honors
top travel agents
at the Bisharat
Golf Club

AIR FRANCE held its annual dinner for the top travel agents at the Bisharat Golf Club last Sunday 29 June. Certificates were given by the Air France Regional Manager, Jordan/Iraq, Mr Jean-Jacques Ledanphie to top travel agents. Orientals for Travel & Tours, Al Tawfiq Travel, Al Badiyah Travel & Tourism received golden certificates. Silver ones were given to Falcons Travel & Tourism, Al Wahs Tourism, eastern services and



Pan Pacific Travel & Tourism, International Traders, Bestours, Bisharat Tours corporation and Near East Tourist Center received bronze certificates. ■

Photo exhibition

'Jerusalem in
Danger'

By K. Attah
Special to The Star

A photographic exhibition on the images of the identity of Jerusalem, is currently being held at the exhibition hall of Al 'Asriya school. Its theme, "Jerusalem in Danger," is hosted by Al 'Asriya School at Tia Ali, Amman. The 96-photographic works are by the renowned Palestinian photojournalist Khalid Zaghari.

According to Mrs Maqboulia Al Yahya, principal of the Al 'Asriya school, the purpose of the exhibition is "to tell the world how Palestinians are suffering from Israeli brutality."

Immediately upon walking into the hall, you realize that you have entered an exhibition that is more than a collection of photographs hung in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

By exhibiting Al Zaghari works he is given the opportunity to create a form of communication to send his message across. His collection are both impressive and expressive of what they reveal than in what they don't.

Take for instance the first two pictures on display, photos of Al Aqsa mosque where about half a million worshippers praise Allah in the holy month of Ramadan. The photographs, taken in 1996, were shot in a classic manner. Next to them, was a photo showing a group of men submissively prostrating to Allah in Al Aqsa Mosque during *Leilatil Qadr*.

Much of the exhibition may be seen as a display of courage and determination. Among the photos are an unarmed Palestinian youth challenging an armed Israeli soldier. The Palestinian youth has his mouth wide opened, a kind of saying "you can shoot me in the mouth, I'm ready to die for my fatherland."

Other images in the exhibition, a school

boy of about 10 years old, wonders what is happening and seems to ask the armed Israeli soldier "what is going on?" Another photo shows an armed Israeli soldier intimidating a Palestinian woman in the city of Ramallah.

The photographs bear witness to Jerusalem being in real danger, with images of Jahlal Arab Bedouins ejected from their tents and of bulldozers carrying out destructive operations in east Jerusalem. Other photos show Palestinians praying in protest on Jabal Abu Ghennim on a Friday in the midst of bulldozers.

The most remarkable photos of Jerusalem in danger are those showing the damaged mosque as a result of the excavation under it carried out by the Israelis to find the lost temple of Solomon which they believe is buried under the Al Aqsa mosques. The restoration of the damaged walls of the mosque is another masterpiece. The photo exposing the broken parts of the south-western wall is a genuine confirmation of the alarming situation in Jerusalem.

Zaghari has taken the opportunity to express his despair and anxiety through photographs. Walking to the area on the left of the exhibition room, he shows the visitor the bru-



Zaghari.



ality and violence of the Israeli soldiers. The most horrible pictures are found in this section of the room. A woman is seen weeping over the death of a husband. Another woman has a badly damaged face in blood.

Perhaps the best example of courage and determination is the picture depicting confrontation between young Palestinians throwing stones and Israeli soldiers with sophisticated weapons. Frustration and anger are portrayed

by the exhibit showing burning of Israeli flags and the effigy of the Israeli Prime Minister.

Through a wealth of outstanding impression and expression in the language of photographs, Zaghari has successfully captured the visitor and explained his vision of a confusing and violent situation in our contemporary world. The exhibition continues till 30 July. ■

Political comedy rocks stage with laughter

By Nahla Al Rifai
Special to The Star

Comedy and realism are today a common combination on the stage in Jordan. Politics and mirth, or the ability to tackle issues in a satirical way has taken a dominant lead in Jordanian theater.

And hence the latest theatrical comedy, *Ya Dar Ma Dakhalek Sharr* (Oh house no evil has entered you). Written by the famous comedian, Hassan Al Ibrahim, the play is already sending audiences into fits of laughter.

The play, however, has a serious message. Essentially it is about domination, culture and nationalism. The gist of the comedy is about Marzook, a man who falls under the spell of an American director by the name of Alice. She in turn forces him to sign a contract to make a film about ancient and modern Arab history, in the way she wants.

Thus famous characters such as 'Antara, Al Khansa' and Hatem Atta' are played out. In addition, various historic tragedies such as the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the '67 Six Day War and Western intellectual domination and Arab resistance to it, are satirically portrayed in this comedy.

The play was directed by Muhammad Helmi. Anwar Khalil, Shaker Jaber, Ase-



ma Morjan, Wafa' Abdullah, Wijdan Al Aboushi, Ayman Al Sabah, Ghadi Sabar, Najeh Kodemat, and Abd Al Majeed Abu Talem also star in the play.

The ending of this play is probably the strangest thing of all. It ends with Marzook refusing to forge Arab history after awakening from his drugged state of consciousness.

The odd thing about it though, is his participation in a song called *Ahlef Bismaha Wa Turabiha* for Abdel Haleem Hafez, which marked Marzook's nationalistic awakening. A funny touch to say the least!

The comedy depicted psychological conflicts as well as intellectual ones, in a very effective and stirring way.

For as it is known, comedy can sometimes be the surest way of getting a point across. But the ending of the comedy seems to have been a bit of a put down. This being especially after the professional performance that was presented.

It nevertheless has to be mentioned that the directing of the play was done with extreme skill. The mental and hypothetical conversations that take place, presented the mind as the center stage for the story. Thus, it was as if a play within a play was in action.

Furthermore, the liveliness and smoothness of the chain of events and thoughts, was masterful. Indeed, Hassan Ibrahim succeeded in presenting a new style in movement and performance, as well as fresh new talents to the stage. Yet, music, lighting, costumes and decoration should have been further enhanced to achieve the desired effect and accredited acclaim that this theatrical comedy deserves. ■

Prestigious Dunes
Club opens next year

Entertaining, exciting and new!! Dunes Club opens in West Amman in spring '98. A sports and social club, it is the first of its kind in the region.

Located beside the Amman National Park, 400 meters away from the airport road and 10 minutes away from the seventh circle, the 'Dunes Club' is built to resemble and function like a country club! A place where families, businessmen and youngsters can spend their weekends, hold business meetings and enjoy social occasions.

The project's overall cost is approximately JD 10 million, and this comes from investors and bank loans. Mr Shaker Ahmad Al Tabba' has been appointed as the head of the board of directors. As for general management, Mr Shafiq Ilias Thabit and Mr Ramzi Farah Masarweh will be responsible for that. Mr Khaled Mansour Al Tabba' is responsible for marketing side of the project. In addition, His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Bin Al Hussein is one of the investors of this would-be prestigious club.

Already, 300 families have joined for membership to the club. About 500 memberships will be granted before the opening, 500 during the first year after the opening, and another 500 during the second year.

The Dunes Club will have the biggest swimming pool in Jordan, as well as an indoor swimming pool, restaurants and a canteen, eight tennis courts, three squash courts, two sports fitness halls, outdoor courts for handball and basketball, a kindergarten, a health and beauty center and saunas for both men and women. There will also be private meetings rooms, party halls and an outside terrace. Around 175 persons will be employed by the club.

The well-known 'International Club Service' organization, are providing the club with consultants for the design and activity of 'Dunes Club'. Country clubs in London and Milan have also been serviced by this group of consultants.

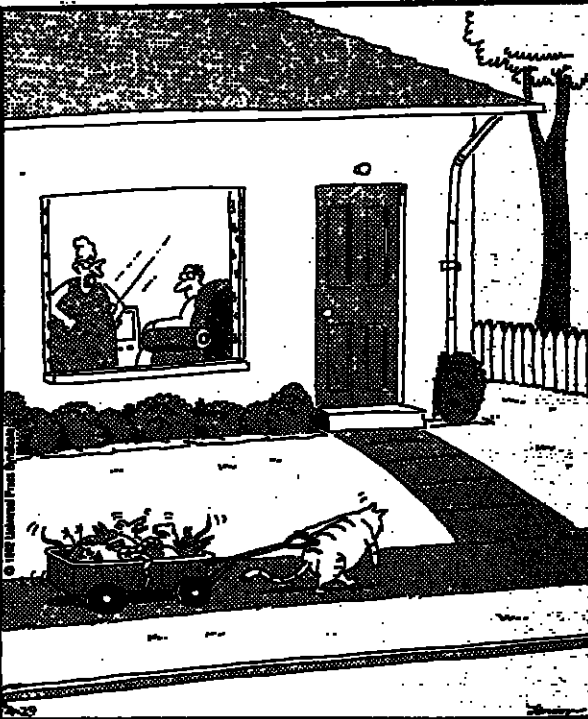
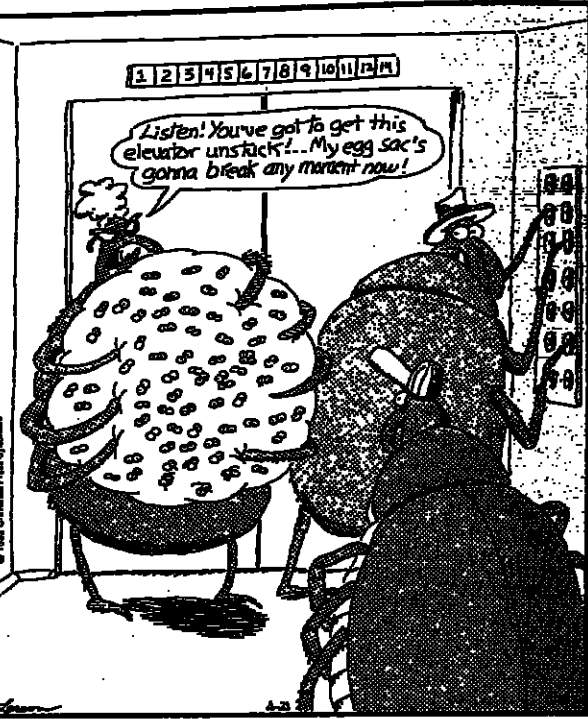
It seems that clubs such as the Orthodox Club and the Royal Automobile Club will be facing some competition come spring '98. ■



Dunes Club Amman... now under construction

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LAYNE



SLAPSTIX
There are two sides to every question: My side and the wrong side!

AGENDA

- Exhibitions**
- "Jerusalem in Danger" photo exhibition by Palestinian photographer Khalid Al Zaghari continues at the Modern Educational School till 31 July.
 - Photography exhibition by Jan Kassey, continues at the French Cultural Centre till 29 July.
 - Artworks of Ali Al Ghoul continues at the Greater Amman Municipality Cultural Dept till 31 July.
 - An exhibition entitled "Silver Jewelry" continues at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation till 20 July.
 - "The Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition" showing the works of more than 60 artists from the Arab world, continues at Darat al Funun, runs till 24 July.
 - An exhibition entitled "Silver Jewelry" continues at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation till 20 July.
 - Le ruffian at The French Cultural Center, Monday 21 July, at 8:30 pm. (Fr.)
 - Maigret at British Council, Tuesday 22 July, at 5:00 pm. (Eng.)
 - Playdays on the Move at British Council, Wednesday 23 July, at 5:00 pm. (Eng.)

Nations debate
Is the
than

The Information
to access, absorb
countries account
technology. First
Times Global R
underlying the i
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Comparing apples
Where

By Bruce W
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were once the domain of
Valley park was the M
The IBM PC was not
testament to the power
the Macintosh offered ra
and-click computing.

Apple Computer was half
mouse-driven GUI system was
model for computing - except
came in the form of the Intel
platform rather
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But at the risk of framing a
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JULY 1997
A special section offering
fresh perspectives on
global issues prepared for
The Star

THE WORLD PAPER

PRINTED IN FIVE LANGUAGES
ON FIVE CONTINENTS



APPEARING IN: AMMAN • BANGKOK • BEIJING • BOGOTA • BOMBAY • BOSTON • CAIRO • CARACAS • DHAKA • HONG KONG • JAKARTA • KARACHI • KUALA LUMPUR • LIMA • MANILA • MEXICO CITY • MOSCOW • PANAMA CITY • QUITO • SAN JOSE • TAIPEI • TOKYO

Nations debate whether to join the US by being more like the US

Is the mouse mightier than the cell phone?

The Information Imperative Index ranks 55 countries on the basis of their ability to access, absorb and effectively utilize information. Combined, the ranked countries account for 97 percent of worldwide expenditures on information technology. First presented last year, the index is prepared annually by World Times Global Research and International Data Corporation. Of the 20 variables underlying the index, five relate directly to personal computers—an emphasis that is tempered by the reality that the average price of a PC can, in many countries, be calculated in multiples of annual per capita income



Comparing apples to oranges

Where's the PC for the rest of us?

By Bernie Yee
THE COMPUTER FOR the rest of us, we were once told by a gleaming Silicon Valley giant, was the Macintosh. The IBM PC was mired in an old text-based operating system, while the Macintosh offered easy, point-and-click, computing. Apple Computer was half right. The mouse-driven, GUI system was to be the model for computing—except that it came in the form of the Intel/Microsoft platform rather than the minds at Apple. While some moan the virtual monopoly this "Wintel" alliance has over our computing, the sheer horsepower on the desktop would have boggled the minds of the mainframe computer designers working only a decade ago. The nearest computer store in America can supply an eager customer with a "home" multimedia system that has many times the computing power used to put a man on the moon.

But—at the risk of framing the question in a nation-centric focus—is the PC revolution a peculiar American phenomenon, rolling out from North America and affecting only nations most culturally aligned with the US? While technophiles from *Wired* magazine to *Newsweek* look to a day where new media access is commonplace in the US, many millions of people around the world have never made a simple telephone call. And now, as the US computer market shows signs of being saturated, today's silicon giants like Intel and Microsoft are looking to create complete, sub-\$1,000 solutions for the rest of America. Web TV and network computers are two examples of their efforts. But to date, the closest mass-market computer platform that exists sits in the hands of a younger demographic—a Nintendo 64 or Sony

PlayStation. How will other nations' lower annual incomes afford the cost of the latest PC? Nor is this question limited to poorer countries. It remains an issue in the ultimate market for early technology adopters—Japan. Compact discs, MiniDisc, DVD, digital imaging products, digital television are all technologies that were available to Japanese consumers years before the US. Japanese CD adoption was a full five years ahead of the US. But Japan is not always an accurate barometer of things American; technology that has become very popular there—PHS phones and MiniDisc—have yet to enjoy the same popularity in the US. Conversely, PC adoption has been sluggish in Japan. Only a few years ago, dedicated word processing "computers" out-

home is not particularly roomy, and PCs take up room. And while playing computer games is the number one or two usage for American PCs, Japanese consumers took video gaming to an art long ago, developing console systems that work with television, have superior graphics and sound better. By the time PCs came along, local tastes were well established, and those tastes didn't include the clunky IBM PC compatible technologies. PC adoption rates are rising in Japan, however, and the Internet has captured enough of the popular imagination to be a good bet for a global communications platform. But the rising popularity of the Wintel technology carries some important footnotes: the cost of a computer is still prohibitively expensive in countries like China, where the average yearly income roughly equals one month's rent in New York City. And that's why pirates, copying software and hardware, have always flourished in Asia.

Those users want technology, but on their terms—not on Intel, Microsoft or US terms. And since intellectual property rights is no simple matter, Asians will still be able to buy Microsoft applications for a few US dollars. But the IBM platform has a huge advantage—off the shelf ease of use. Shops in China the size of a walk-in closet can open, take orders, and assemble motherboards, hard drives, chassis and operating systems to

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN CUMULATIVE SCORES SINCE 1996 INDEX, TOP FIVE AND BOTTOM FIVE COUNTRIES

Hard drive.....			
Japan	+18.36%	Ecuador	+1.69%
Malaysia	+17.65%	Germany	-0.08%
Singapore	+16.96%	New Zealand	-2.58%
Korea	+15.72%	Sweden	-2.60%
Philippines	+12.84%	Mexico	-4.47%
		Download	

SOURCE: WORLD TIMES GLOBAL RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL DATA CORPORATION

numbered PCs there. And the Internet? An English-speaking network. The reasons for slower PC adoption? Real estate. The traditional Japanese



THE 1997 INFORMATION IMPERATIVE INDEX

Measuring social, information, and computer infrastructures

COUNTRY	SOCIAL	INFORMATION	COMPUTER	OVERALL SCORE
United States	544 (2)	2,819 (1)	2,433 (1)	4,987
Finland	536 (3)	938 (13)	2,127 (2)	3,591

COUNTRY	SOCIAL	INFORMATION	COMPUTER	OVERALL SCORE
Sweden	485 (9)	1,235 (9)	1,722 (7)	3,442
Denmark	482 (10)	1,280 (4)	1,688 (8)	3,440
Norway	518 (5)	1,057 (10)	1,848 (6)	3,423
Canada	573 (1)	1,135 (8)	1,611 (10)	3,319
Netherlands	493 (7)	1,193 (7)	1,613 (9)	3,299
Switzerland	463 (13)	1,621 (11)	1,789 (5)	3,273
New Zealand	526 (4)	1,289 (3)	1,434 (12)	3,248
United Kingdom	461 (15)	1,212 (8)	1,571 (11)	3,244
Japan	451 (17)	1,422 (2)	1,398 (13)	3,233
Australia	453 (16)	871 (15)	1,815 (5)	3,139
Singapore	282 (40)	824 (17)	1,859 (3)	2,965
Hong Kong	487 (23)	1,037 (10)	1,182 (15)	2,826
Germany	467 (12)	824 (17)	1,204 (14)	2,485
Austria	486 (8)	816 (20)	1,182 (17)	2,414
Israel	412 (22)	879 (14)	1,123 (16)	2,414
France	470 (18)	930 (12)	965 (21)	2,374
Belgium	463 (13)	821 (19)	1,052 (19)	2,338
Ireland	428 (19)	772 (21)	1,063 (18)	2,263

COUNTRY	SOCIAL	INFORMATION	COMPUTER	OVERALL SCORE
Taiwan	365 (30)	842 (16)	736 (23)	1,943
Korea	469 (11)	453 (33)	999 (20)	1,921
Italy	480 (24)	746 (23)	752 (22)	1,898
Spain	427 (19)	748 (22)	583 (24)	1,768
Czech Rep	413 (20)	675 (25)	586 (25)	1,654
UAE	236 (46)	695 (24)	418 (28)	1,349
Portugal	362 (31)	451 (34)	498 (27)	1,311
Greece	378 (28)	556 (26)	376 (32)	1,302
Hungary	385 (25)	520 (28)	384 (33)	1,269
Poland	381 (26)	477 (30)	298 (36)	1,156
Argentina	369 (29)	466 (31)	295 (37)	1,130
Chile	354 (32)	350 (41)	407 (31)	1,111
Bulgaria	333 (34)	335 (42)	135 (45)	1,063
Russia	413 (20)	455 (32)	193 (48)	1,061
Malaysia	238 (48)	329 (44)	501 (26)	1,060
South Africa	323 (36)	271 (47)	411 (38)	1,005

COUNTRY	SOCIAL	INFORMATION	COMPUTER	OVERALL SCORE
Venezuela	333 (34)	395 (38)	271 (40)	999
Colombia	227 (49)	351 (40)	416 (29)	994
Brazil	242 (44)	424 (35)	318 (35)	984
Costa Rica	332 (33)	326 (45)	283 (38)	961
Mexico	271 (41)	394 (39)	275 (39)	948
Ecuador	278 (42)	486 (36)	224 (42)	903
Panama	380 (28)	283 (53)	360 (34)	853
Thailand	250 (43)	310 (46)	280 (41)	829
Jordan	236 (46)	487 (37)	162 (49)	805
Romania	371 (27)	271 (47)	130 (51)	772
Philippines	321 (37)	229 (50)	196 (44)	737
Peru	385 (28)	217 (52)	193 (46)	715
China	119 (54)	483 (39)	118 (55)	712
Turkey	223 (50)	341 (42)	115 (54)	679
Saudi Arabia	112 (55)	334 (43)	219 (43)	665
India	248 (45)	218 (51)	116 (53)	574
Indonesia	148 (53)	245 (49)	183 (48)	566
Egypt	185 (51)	176 (54)	147 (50)	516
Pakistan	171 (52)	182 (55)	129 (52)	482

SOURCES

IDC 1996 Worldwide Black Book; IDC Proprietary Research; UNDP Human Development Report; UN Statistical Yearbook; World Development Indicators; The World Bank; World Telecommunications Development Report; ITU; Freedom House; www.thelists.com; www.nw.com

FACTORS COMPRISING THE INDEX

- Social Infrastructure**
 - Secondary school enrollment
 - Tertiary school enrollment
 - Newspaper readership
 - Press freedom
 - Civil liberties
- Information Infrastructure**
 - Telephone lines/capita
 - Telephone faults/line
 - Radio ownership/capita
 - Fax ownership/capita
 - Cellular phones/capita
 - Cable/satellite television coverage
- Computer Infrastructure**
 - PCs installed/capita
 - Home PC shipped/household
 - Government/commercial PCs shipped/non-agricultural work force
 - Education PCs shipped/student and faculty
 - Networked PCs %
 - Software/hardware spending
 - Internet service providers
 - Internet hosts/capita

order. It's easy with IBM compatible systems, impossible with Apple's Macintosh, which comes completely assembled. The IBM compatible PC has dominated the American market, and companies like Intel and Microsoft are looking to establish new market dominance overseas. But there's no question that while new markets are forming outside the US, the "industry standards" set by big American firms have shallow roots in overseas soil. Can a new standard emerge around the world? You bet. Neither Intel nor Microsoft has gained market dominance internationally. Is anyone at Apple—or anywhere else—listening? The world is still waiting for the computer for the rest of us. ©

BERNIE YEE, A NEW YORK-BASED ENTERTAINMENT LAWYER, IS A COLUMNIST FOR *Next Generation*.



Byting into the Budget

Never mind income disparity—the price of information and computing equipment varies greatly between the nations of the developed and developing world. How much does it cost for the average citizen of the world to catch a ride on the information superhighway? Just as the Big Mac Index measures hamburger purchasing power, PC Index indicates the price of comparable computer systems between the skaters, striders, sprinters, and strollers in the Information Imperative Index.

The price shown is for a laptop personal computer with 16 megabytes RAM, 1.4 gigabit hard drive, 6X CD ROM, and standard screen.

Skaters	In US \$	Striders	In US \$
United States (1)	\$3,999	Taiwan (21)	\$4,019
		Spain (24)	\$4,763
		Chile (32)	\$5,403
		Malaysia (35)	\$3,461
Sprinters	In US \$	Strollers	In US \$
Sweden (3)	\$4,949	Brazil (39)	\$5,318
Denmark (4)	\$3,974	Costa Rica (40)	\$5,501
Norway (5)	\$6,796	Mexico (41)	\$5,670
Australia (12)	\$4,659	Thailand (44)	\$3,634
Hong Kong (14)	\$3,481		
Ireland (20)	\$4,372		

Public telephone monopolies strangle all aspects of IT

In Africa, the spider is too busy eating other spiders to spin a web

By Amolo Ng'weno

IN TANZANIA, A PERSONAL computer costs ten times the US\$630 per capita gross domestic product (GDP). This is one of a number of formidable barriers that stand between Africans and the information revolution. It is a revolution based on dramatic recent gains in the affordability and accessibility of telephones and personal computers. Unfortunately, most of these gains have had very little impact on the average African.

While most large and medium-sized businesses in Africa are starting to computerize and computer sales are growing rapidly, this is basically restricted to the capital cities and a few formal-sector workers. With PCs and the necessary software costing upward of US\$4,000 (duties and shipping mean the prices are often much higher than in the US), virtually no-one has a PC at home. Half of the African population has never used a telephone—even in industrial areas, telephone lines are difficult to acquire, expensive (they're metered by the minute) and frequently of bad quality.

Frustratingly, this same revolution offers the people of Africa a unique opportunity to catch up with the developed world at low cost, at least compared to the cost of developing education, finance and trading through conventional libraries, schools, banking, information transfer and commercial transactions.

But even a relatively low cost is too much for most Africans, and community options for Internet access are limited by a combination of high investment costs, the unavailability of telephone lines in poor and rural areas and the lack of minimally-trained personnel to set up and staff community

cybercafes or school Internet access points. Tele-density in Kenya, which is relatively advanced within Africa, is less than one line per hundred in the rural areas and about 5 lines in the capital city. Payphones are widespread, including in small towns, but they don't always work. Many other African countries have less than one line per hundred people overall, including Uganda (0.25), Ethiopia (0.3) and the Central African Republic (0.3).

Why the difficulty? In Africa, state monopolies have long believed that only they are willing to invest in rural telephony. As a reward for investing in the rural areas, only they should be allowed to capture the revenues from international, long distance and local telephone service. The result: waiting lists are several years long even in the cities.

Yet technology catch-up is within our reach in Africa. New technologies are constantly being developed that will help to reduce some of these barriers. Non-PC terminals are being developed that will cost a lot less to the end

user while delivering most of the networking and communications benefits of the PC-based Internet of today. Intelligent devices for television can now browse the web. Your cellphone can collect your e-mail. For someone who has never used a computer, these are potentially much cheaper and easier entry points to the networked world.

A growing number of countries have liberalized cellular services, which cuts the time on a waiting list down enormously for those who can pay. Internet services are subject to relatively light licensing requirements in most countries, although they depend on the existence and functioning of the usual telephone network.

Furthermore, some countries (such as Ghana, Uganda and Guinea) are going further by allowing a second telephone operator to compete with the privatized/commercialized state monopoly to provide basic telephone services. Both old and new operators are given aggressive goals for building up the network; overall sub-Saharan Africa plans to put in more than 10 million phones in the next 3-5 years (which more than double total installed phone capacity). Both competition and technology improvements should see the price of each call drop—international phone calls are currently 2-5 times the price of the same call in the reverse direction.

But these benefits will come slowly, since most of the African telephone companies are still resisting change. Many governments still don't believe they'll make more in taxes from a liberalized telecoms sector and a more efficient commercial sector than the derisory profits (sometimes negative) they now receive from the state telephone company.

Each year these attitudes hold sway, the costs to the African public become greater. As the world gets wired, we need telephones to connect with each other throughout Africa—and beyond—and to take advantage of the new technologies that will make networking cheaper and easier for those lower down the income scale. ☐

AMOLO NG'WENO IS VICE PRESIDENT FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT AFRICA ONLINE, AN INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER IN FIVE AFRICAN COUNTRIES. (WWW.AFRICAONLINE.COM)

Each year these attitudes hold sway, the costs to the African public become greater. As the world gets wired, we need telephones to connect with each other throughout Africa—and beyond—and to take advantage of the new technologies that will make networking cheaper and easier for those lower down the income scale. ☐

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World Bank gets info religion for development

Wishing for an abacus in a sea of IT faithful

By Crocker Snow Jr.

IF YOU WANT to produce leftist revolutionaries, give Third World students scholarships to American universities. If you want free market conservatives, give them scholarships to Russia.

This parable of the 1980s has died with the end of the Cold War, but its counter-intuitive lesson remains. The epicenter of a religious order is rarely the best place to produce converts.

A late-June World Bank meeting in Toronto entitled *Global Knowledge—subtitled Knowledge for Development in the Information Age*—is the latest case in point. The vastness of the subject combined with the pat, positive IT prejudices of the participants left a disconcerting, and somewhat unconvincing aftertaste. The ambitious conference, sponsored by the World Bank and supported by a variety of public institutions and private enterprises, drew a range of international government ministers, development experts, networked NGOs

and IT industry types. They gathered to celebrate the shared perception that information technology represents the greatest tool ever for rapid and equitable human development.

The turnout, some 2,200 from 143 countries (one third on scholarships from the World Bank) indicated a very special appetite. But the very architecture of the conference, with 115 workshops and seven tracks of inquiry spread among four hotels, was awkward in the extreme. And IT didn't help make it easier. The only imparting of knowledge was unstructured, undisciplined and unprioritized.

With workshops entitled "Learning Organizations and Knowledge Management" and "Capacity Building in Information Technology and Connectivity," this participant felt that he'd fallen through the looking glass. Oh for a straightforward, humanistic "Grandma's Lessons to Live By," the "Boy Scout Handbook" or "Seven Blunders of the World," the list of universal mistakes which lead to violence that Mohandas Gandhi gave to his grandson. There was a sameness, a uniformity of views expressed that triggered skepticism.

Yes of course, as the World Bank's Jim Wolfensohn and the UN's Kofi Annan put it, connectedness is critical to future equitable human development. True, as Costa Rica's president Miguel Figueres stated, computers make distance learning and education a real time reality.

Yes, as the World Bank's chief economist Joseph Stiglitz brayed, deregulation

of monopolistic telecom companies in many a developing country is critical to providing equal access.

Interestingly, as Michael Dell of Dell Computers explained, there is a correlation between PC usage, productivity and labor costs.

But such a meeting of development types gathered around the values and virtues of personal computers and inter-linked networks had a disquieting tone of techno-righteousness that almost demanded a libertarian, Luddite reaction in response. Rare was the sideways glance or the flash of fun that an unlikely speaker, Kate White of Black & White

Communications, showed in exclaiming that, "In today's anonymous world, complete strangers ask how big my hard drive is!"

Many of the workshops were case study oriented. Distant stories of good works involving new information technologies being used to meet the most basic of human needs abounded. Underlying almost every one was the drive of an individual, not the capacities of a hard drive

needs—food, health and education—abounded. Underlying almost every one was the drive of an individual, not the capacities of a hard drive. If the possibilities of information technology loom, so too do the pitfalls.

It isn't all that easy to link disparate societies up around central formulas and at the same time retain full cultural identity. There's nothing simple about educating people in computer use and valued computer application. With an Internet dominated by Western (and English language) ways, means and methodology, it's daunting for non-Western nations to inoculate themselves against the gravity of information imperialism.

Dell, the 31-year-old wonder who dropped out of the University of Texas and has turned his company into the largest computer sales company in the world, gave one of few keynotes by a businessman before a plenary lineup of inter-governmental personalities. He squandered the opportunity to deliver a reality check.

Dell's short speech was unoriginal in content and a little patronizing in tone. With all the power of his computers and a panoply of graphics programs at his disposal, his presentation didn't reflect the human experience. Before a banquet audience of about 1,000, with two large screens to project his facial expressions and passions, he chose to focus the audience on three, word-covered slides. Dehumanizing digitalism.

The Global Knowledge conference convened on the day the technology column appeared in the *New York Times* under the title: "Are the high technology wonders of today any less sinkable than the *Titanic*?" Characterizing numerous state of the art advances that the *Titanic* represented before its demise, Ed Rothstein, the paper's cultural critic-at-large, concluded by quoting an editorial in the *Belfast Morning News* written in June 1911—before the *Titanic* was even launched.

"It is difficult to understand why the owners and builders named this ship *Titanic*. The Titans were a mythological race who came to believe they'd conquered nature, who thought they'd achieved power and learning greater than Zeus himself, to their ultimate ruin. He smote the strong and daring Titans with thunderbolts; and their final abiding place was in limbo beneath the lowest depths of the Tartarus, a sunless abyss below Hades."

The global information clan might reflect on this a bit. And while they're at it, where does the name Java come from? ☐

CROCKER SNOW JR. IS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *The World Paper*.

THE WORLD PAPER

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ENGLISH PROGRAM

SATURDAY

8:30—Holy Koran
9:00—French Program
9:30—Neighborhood
10:00—French Program
10:30—News Headlines
11:00—Hannibal with Me
11:30—Comet
12:00—Meditation
12:30—From
1:00—New Times
1:30—News at Ten
2:00—Meditation
2:30—Feature Film

SUNDAY

8:30—Holy Koran
9:00—French Program
9:30—American Home
10:00—Video
10:30—French Program
11:00—News at Ten
11:30—American Home
12:00—Video
12:30—French Program
1:00—News at Ten
1:30—American Home
2:00—Video
2:30—French Program
3:00—News at Ten
3:30—American Home
4:00—Video
4:30—French Program
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6:30—French Program
7:00—News at Ten
7:30—American Home
8:00—Video
8:30—French Program
9:00—News at Ten
9:30—American Home
10:00—Video
10:30—French Program
11:00—News at Ten
11:30—American Home

MONDAY

8:30—Holy Koran
9:00—French Program
9:30—Neighborhood
10:00—French Program
10:30—Ocean Girl
11:00—Nature by Design
11:30—French Program
12:00—News at Ten
12:30—Video
1:00—French Program
1:30—News at Ten
2:00—Video
2:30—French Program
3:00—News at Ten
3:30—Video
4:00—French Program
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CROSSWORD

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The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV from 19-25 July

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY

- 3:30—Holy Koran
- 3:35—French Programs
- 4:00—Neighbors
- 4:10—French Programs
- 4:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Hangin' with Mr. Cooper
- 8:00—Magazine Zero One
- 8:30—Prison
- 9:10—Time Trax
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:30—Macgyver
- 11:15—Feature Film

SUNDAY

- 3:30—Holy Koran
- 3:35—French Programs
- 4:00—America's Home Video
- 4:30—Energy Express
- 5:15—American Chart Show
- 6:00—French Programs
- 7:00—News in French
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Fresh Prince of Bel Air
- 8:00—Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
- 8:30—National Geographic
- 9:10—Renegade
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:30—One West Walkiki
- 11:15—Sisters

MONDAY

- 3:30—Holy Koran
- 3:40—Spirou
- 4:05—Neighbors
- 4:30—Deep Water Haven
- 5:00—Ocean Girl
- 5:15—Nature By Profession
- 6:10—French Programs
- 7:00—News in French
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Murphy Brown
- 8:00—The Giant Nile
- 8:30—Babylon 5
- 9:10—Highlander



Kung Fu, Thursday at 9:10 pm

TUESDAY

- 3:30—Holy Koran
- 3:35—French Programs
- 4:00—Super Sport Follie
- 4:30—Dog House
- 5:00—Square on TV
- 5:10—The Album Show
- 6:10—French Programs
- 7:00—News in French
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Coach
- 8:00—Tilt
- 8:30—Encounter
- 9:10—Nature of Things
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:30—West Beach
- 11:15—Drug Wars

WEDNESDAY

- 3:30—Holy Koran
- 3:35—French Programs
- 4:05—Neighbors
- 4:30—Spell Binder
- 5:30—Forests of The World
- 6:00—French Programs
- 7:00—News in French
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Step by Step
- 8:10—Soldier's Diary
- 8:30—Challenges (Local talk show)
- 9:10—Spencer for Hire
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:25—Land's End
- 11:00—American Gothic

THURSDAY

- 3:30—Holy Koran
- 3:35—French Programs

Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): Liar Liar
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): A Walk In The Clouds
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): Jerry Maguire
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): Devil's Own
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): Spacejam

Highlight of the week at the Pleasure Dome

● First First love, first kiss, first car...it's all part of the **BOOK OF LOVE**

Who wrote the book of love? Not Jack Twiller (Chris Young), whose hilarious efforts to impress the prettiest girl in the school lead to disaster. Whether throwing wild parties, imitating James Dean, or "streaking" through the neighbourhood with his outrageous friends, Jack will do whatever it takes to win the illusive girl of his dreams. But in his obsession for the prom queen, he overlooks the one girl who really appreciates his unique charm. Boasting a classic rock-and-roll soundtrack and an irresistible young cast, **BOOK OF LOVE** is a comic chapter in the life of a hormone-stricken teen who suffers all the hilarious humiliations of adolescence, but finally finds that growing up isn't all that bad!

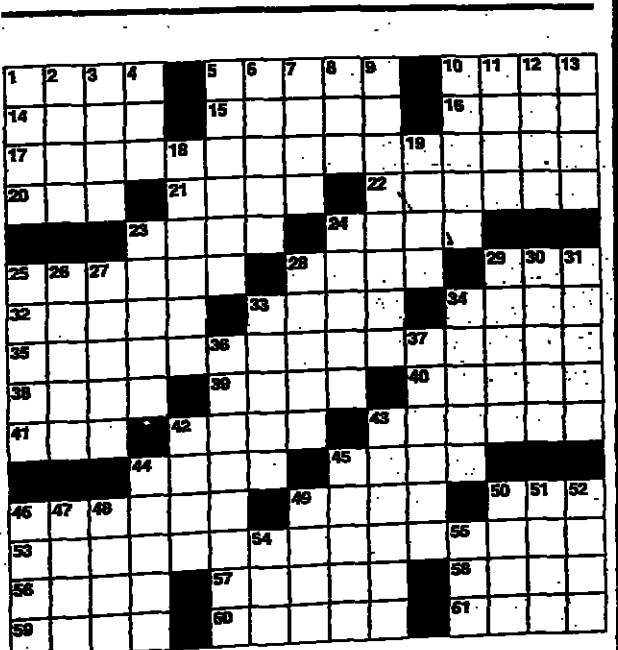


Video Releases

- **Bad Moon:** Full moon, crescent moon, quarter moon, each is a Bad Moon for Ted Harrison. By day, he's a photo journalist enjoying a stay with family in the pacific north west. By night, he trans figures into a horrific half human-a ware wolf.
- **Critters 2:** (The Main Course) Their hair balls from outer space, are back for seconds. In no time, eggs are popping open everywhere-a field full of live stock becomes a gigantic feeding ground, and local residents are disappearing by the mouth full. Can the bounty hunters from deep space wipe out the critters before an American town is erased from the map?
- **Fly Away Home:** Inspired by a true story, this film tells the story of an orphaned child who stumbles on orphaned goose eggs. Nurturing the baby geese does not mean she can teach them to fly, or does it? Find out in this terrific family fun.
- **Mermmaids:** the attractive Mrs. Flax (Cher) does not exactly lead a settled life. Whenever one of her romances fails, she moves to another city. That happened so far 18 times. Cher, her daughters Charlotte (Wynona Ryder) and Kate (Christina Ricci) and Cher's new romance (Bob Hoskins) put together a very enter training romantic comedy featuring the Choop Choop song.

Courtesy: "The Pleasure Dome" Tel: 676558 - Fax: 5538087

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- ACROSS
- 1 At a distance
 - 5 Whiny forecast
 - 10 Davenport
 - 14 Gentle's home
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 - 35 Presidential race step, always
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- 38 Annoys
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 - 40 Pym or Durne
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 - 42 Dynamic
 - 43 Flying pan
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 - 46 More unlightly
 - 49 One: Ger.
 - 50 Mineral spring
 - 53 Presidential race term, once
 - 56 Repeat roads
 - 57 Modules
 - 58 In good shape
 - 59 Standout
 - 60 Minimal
 - 61 Frank

—This Week's— HOROSCOPES

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: All you water signs need to launch your new projects now. Make commitments. They'll last forever.

Aries (March 21-April 19). If you're applying for a loan, be careful. The deal may not really be as good as it looks. Run out the numbers.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Hold your ground against tough competition. You can get something you want if you share costs with a friend.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). You're swamped. Don't even schedule a date. Besides, your friends may ask you out and insist on paying. Watch for a money-saving tip.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). You're lucky in love, but you could have a few problems with money. Make a romantic commitment you'd love to keep.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Don't schedule any dates. Finish something you promised to do at home instead. Meet friends at the gym for a high-speed workout.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're even smarter than usual. Organize your friends to do something impressive. Clean up a mess at home so you can entertain.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Don't forget your objective and you'll gain ground. Use your intelligence plus a little research to find the answer.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You're a dynamo. Contacts far away could lead to a marvelous adventure, so reach out and touch someone.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Don't talk about your financial situation, unless it's to a potential lender. You're more likely to get what you want.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Help a friend who's in a jam. Get the information you need by networking. Private negotiations lead to a breakthrough.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Put up with an older person's manipulations, but don't fall for them. Do what you would have done anyway.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). You're very lucky. You'll need it—to side-step problems that keep popping up. Listen attentively to an older person.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: You're transforming into the person you've always wanted to be, through hard work.

Bridge

Don't Waste High Cards

By Omar Sharif and Tannah Hirsch

Neither vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH

♠ K J 8 4
♥ K 7 3
♦ Q 10 7 3
♣ A 4

WEST

♠ 7 3
♥ Q J 9 8
♦ A 6 2
♣ J 9 7 5

EAST

♠ A 6 2
♥ A 6 2
♦ 9 5 4
♣ Q 10 8 6 2

SOUTH

♠ A Q 10 9 5
♥ 10 5 4
♦ K J 8
♣ K 3

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Queen of ♥

"Cover an honor with an honor" is one of the oldest maxims in bridge, and one of the least correct. Logic is a much better guideline to the proper play.

Four spades is a simple contract to reach. All that remains is to make it after the lead of the queen of hearts. The key is recognizing which is the key card in the South holding.

What are the chances that West is leading away from the ace of hearts? Virtually nil. Therefore, if you cover the queen with the king, it is sure to lose. Not only that, a heart will be returned and the defenders will start off by cashing three heart tricks with the ace of diamonds yet to come. South will be down before entering the fray.

The important card in the South hand is the ten of hearts. Look at the difference if declarer does not cover the queen of hearts—the defense cannot continue to attack hearts profitably. If West persists with the jack, declarer covers and the ten is promoted to a trick. If West perseveres with a low heart instead, duck in dummy and either your ten will win or, if East rises with the ace, dummy's king becomes a winner.

Therefore, the defenders must abandon the heart suit. That gives declarer time to draw trumps, force out the ace of diamonds and take a heart discard on the long diamond, thereby losing only two hearts and a diamond.

As Eddie Kantar explains in his third set of Lessons: When the queen is led through K x x (x) in dummy and you have 10 x x in hand, it is usually right to play low from dummy. When you have three worthless cards in hand, play low from dummy and hope East has the ace with shortness. If so, your king will eventually become trick.

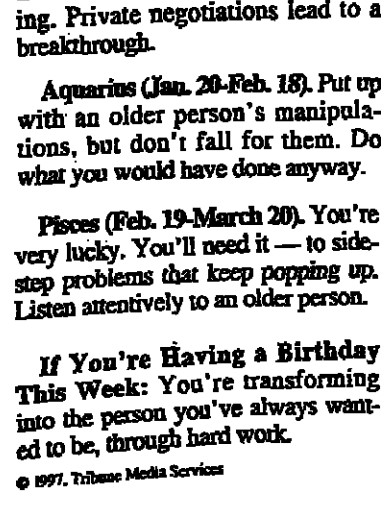
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TRUE! By Daryl Cagle



The Pentagon's recipe for brownies (document MIL-C-44072 C) is 22 pages long and took six months and 175 work hours to prepare.

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Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

VOYEC

WETIC

DYFLAG

COALLE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoons.

Print answer here: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ANSWER: WHAT YOU CAN GET AT SOME FLEA MARKETS.

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Would You Believe...

Cumberland Road was the first federal highway in the United States.

The British Empire abolished slave trading within its borders in 1807.

Reuben James was the name of the first U.S. warship sunk during World War II.

The first American missionaries reached Hawaii in 1820.

Louis Pasteur developed the first successful vaccine for rabies.

To be described as being "avuncular" means that you have qualities of an uncle. Whether that's flattering or not is a different matter.

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Gianni Versace: Death of 'King of Frock 'n' Roll'

Continued from page 1

Gianni Versace, together with a handful of names, symbolizes the success of Italian fashion all over the world," Armani said, adding that his rival's death "has left me in a state of shock." A fashion show on Rome's Spanish steps featuring top international models was postponed in a gesture of mourning. Versace, who has been suffering from cancer, had declined to attend the Rome show on health grounds, preferring to stay with his male companion in Miami.

Versace's global empire reached from its design operation in Milan to a production network across Italy and more than 165 boutiques from Tokyo to New York's Fifth Avenue. Its accessory branches include Gianni Versace Profumery, Versace L'Homme and other fragrances, and Versace Make-Up, the company's recent venture into the beauty business. There are 23 Versace stores, carrying his less expensive line.

For all his celebrity courting and globe-trotting—he had palatial homes in Milan, Como (Italy's lake country), New York and Miami Beach—Versace claimed to thrive on his sensitivity to the mass market. "The roots of Italian designers are mainstream people," he recently told Time magazine. "In Italy, you have to relate to real people; while in France the designers seem to relate only to transvestites on the (fashion show) runways. We may have less fantasy, but we're more realistic."

It was a lucrative formula. Sales rose 23.5 percent last year to \$485 million, 80 percent of it from sales abroad. The company reported \$40 million profits after taxes.

Yet Versace SpA remained largely in the hands of three people—Gianni, his brother, Santo, and sister, Donatella. Some industry specialists say the company now looks suddenly vulnerable. "A lot of the value in Versace is tied up in Gianni himself—not exactly a one-man show, but he was very much the front man," said Paul Gordon, a luxury goods analyst at the Italian brokerage house IMI Sigeco.

Versace's death is expected to delay a long-awaited move by the family to restructure and become a public company with shares listed on the Milan and possibly the New York Stock Exchange next summer. Santo Versace, the chairman and managing director, once explained that by going public the company would "automatically acquire a second and third generation... a commitment to carry Versace beyond its founders."

Santo and Donatella have two children each; Gianni, who never married, had none.

Industry analysts say investors should watch fashion shows over the next year for clues of the company's ability to carry on.

Versace staged a show in Florence last month, bringing out a men's collection. His couture collection for women was shown in Paris last weekend.

"His influence will be in that next collection," said Michael Swift, a management consultant for Kurt Salmon Associates in Milan. "The collection to watch is the one after that—the first



one he won't have a hand in."

Some fashion critics say Donatella is capable of stepping into her brother's shoes. She already designs the company's successful Versus line and is credited with inspiring some of Gianni's more outrageous looks. "When you have a really strong business and a designer with the same name, I think there's a very real chance that, even if they lose a step or two, they'll continue just fine," Swift said.

The last time the Italian fashion world was jolted by violent death was two years ago when Mr Maurizio Gucci was murdered in Milan. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Foster passes hearing test in 'Contact'

By Kenneth Turan

HOLLYWOOD—Whatever's Out There has always fascinated people Down Here, especially movie people. But these days, instead of watching the skies (as those 1950s films encouraged everyone to do), people are listening to them. "Contact" tells us what one woman heard and how the world reacted.

Starring Jodie Foster in an exceptional performance as the radio astronomer who listened, and directed by Robert Zemeckis in his first outing since "Forrest Gump," "Contact" is superior popular filmmaking, both polished and effective. But despite its success and its serious intentions, it's finally a movie where the storytelling makes more of an impact than the story.

Balanced between wanting to deal with the philosophical and scientific issues that concerned Carl Sagan, who wrote the original 1985 novel, and making sure to satisfy the cravings of a mass audience, "Contact" manages to have it both ways most but not all of the time. Not as profound as it would like to be, with a decidedly soft central message, it is nevertheless thoughtful and intelligent for the Hollywood summer entertainment it basically is.

Expertly directed by Zemeckis, who makes this kind of prestige studio production look easier than it is, "Contact" never loses touch with its "who are we and why are we here" sense of wonder about the universe that is its greatest strength. While it has a strongly sentimental side and wanders into conventional territory more often than it realizes, "Contact" manages an almost gyroscopic ability to right itself whenever absolutely necessary.

Much of this is due to Foster, whose skill and presence seem to increase with each picture and who dominates "Contact" in the best possible sense. Her portrayal of astronomer Ellie Arroway, a character she knows intimately, demonstrates why no one is more persuasive at conveying intelligence and single-minded passion to the point of confrontational anger. Foster is "Contact's" lodestar, and when she is on screen, the film can't help but be engrossing.

Arroway is first encountered in a prologue as an 8-year-old shortwave radio buff with a gentle father (David Morse) and an eagerness (well-conveyed by young actress Jena Malone) to hear from far-away places. Dad also ignites her interest in extraterrestrials with a folksy "if it is just us, seems like an awful waste of space" homily the film likes enough to use three times.

As an adult astronomer who has come to trust her work more than people, Arroway has turned into someone accurately characterized as "brilliant,



driven, a major pain in the ass... obsessed with a field that's considered professional suicide." That would be her affiliation with SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, a group of scientists who listen doggedly for a signal from the skies.

Arroway's superior, National Science Foundation head David Drumlin (Tom Skerritt), is markedly unsympathetic, typically greeting her with a dismissive, "Still waiting for E.T. to call?" A further run-in with Drumlin leads Arroway to reclusive billionaire S.R. Hadden (an assured John Hurt), who lives on an airplane and knows exactly what he wants to do with all his money.

Arroway also connects with a different kind of man, Palmer Joss, played by heartthrob du jour Matthew McConaughey. A kind of self-defrocked priest, "a man of the cloth without the cloth" who "couldn't live with the whole celibacy thing," Joss is a writer who feels the modern passion for technology and science is corroding the world's moral values.

Though the science vs. religion, does-God-exist discussions he has with Arroway are some of "Contact's" most interesting, Joss has a tendency to come off as a ruggedly handsome signboard for the film's ideas. Also, the James V. Hart and Michael Goldenberg script upgrades Joss to much more of a conventional love interest than he was in Sagan's book. It's a transition that has its bumpy aspects as Joss, a construct more than a fully fleshed-out character, pops in and out of events in a not-always-convincing way.

Clocking in at 2 1/2 hours, "Contact" is most alive during its central section, when Arroway, sitting next to a photogenic group of dish-shaped radio telescopes near Socorro, N.M., and hoping as per usual for a sign from the cosmos, hears what is unmistakably a signal from the beyond.

The source turns out to be Vega, a spot 26 light-years away, and how Arroway and her colleagues take the numerous steps necessary to decipher that message, what it says, and how Arroway fights to retain a part in its implications, are conveyed in a rush of images and sequences that are so invigorating it's possible to be swept away and overlook how skillfully it's all been put together.

For this, much credit has to go to director Zemeckis, cinematographer Don Burgess and editor Arthur Schmidt. The wizardly storytelling style they employ is seamless and involving, with all manner of elegant camera moves. Even bravura sequences like tracking Foster as she runs from her car through the lab to check on the signal (a scene that according to American Cinematographer was shot in two separate locations months apart) are so intrinsic to the narrative they never seem showy or excessive.

"Contact" has difficulty maintaining this momentum through its extended final segment. Partly it's that the initial section, the quest, makes the best use of the strengths of Foster's characterization, of Arroway's almost painful eagerness to make intergalactic contact. Also—and this goes to the heart of what "Contact" is lacking—the idea of the search turns out to be more involving than the knowledge that ends up being found.

Not helping is the tendency of the plot (despite appearances by James Woods as the president's national security adviser and Angela Bassett as a White House power) to get increasingly contrived and unsatisfying as the story unfolds. Even more than usually involving visual effects (supervised by Ken Ralston) can't fill that gap.

Still, when you think of how little to chew on summer films usually give us, "Contact" has to shine by comparison. ■

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